

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT ET

SUBJ: CURRENT STATUS OF SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST HOSPITAL

REF: ADDIS ABABA 8055, ADDIS ABABA 8394

1. ON JULY 29 MR. CHARLES D. WATSON, VICE PRESIDNET FOR AFRO-MIDEAST DIVISION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISITS (SDA), AND DR. TED FLAIZ, SDA ETHIOPIA, CALLED ON CHARGE TO REPORT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING SDA HOSPITAL. MR. WATSON MET WITH ATO TADELE MENGESHA, PERMANENT SECRETARY IN THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH, ON JULY 28 IN AN ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE IF THE HISPITAL HAD BEEN NATIONALIZED. ATO TADELE STATED THAT IT DEFINITELY WAS AS OF JULY 8, BUT WHEN MR. WATSON REQUESTED WRITTEN VERIFICATION ATO TADELE STATED THAT MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH WOULD NOT PROVIDE SUCH A DOCUMENT. WHEN MR. WATSON INQUIRED ABOUT OBLIGATION OF SDA REGARDING SEVERANCE PAY FOR HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES AND PENSIONS OF RETIRED EMPLOYEES, ATO TADELE SAID THAT THESE ISSUES WERE RESPONSIBILITY OF MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND NOT OF PUBLIC HEALTH. WATSON ASKED IF EMPLOYEES COULD BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER SDA MEDICAL INSTALLATIONS. ATO TADELE REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE, INDICATING THEY WERE NOW EMPLOYEES OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH. HE THEN TOLD MR. WATSON THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF SDA HOSPITAL AT GIMBI AND THE TEN CLINICS RUN BY SDA

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THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. MR. WATSON EXPRESSED HIS WILLINGNESS

TO DISCUSS THE MATTER IMMEDIATELY, BUT ATO TADELE STATED THAT HE DID NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT TIME THEN AND ANOTHER APPOINTMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE. COMMENT : MR. WATSON SUSPECTS THAT THE MINISTRY INS CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF NATIONALIZING THE SDA CLINICS AND HISPITAL AT GIMBI. IN ADDITION TO THESE INSTALLA 589, , SDA ALSO HAS A HISPITAL AT DESSIE WHICH HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR THREE YEARS AND ONE AT DEBRE TABOR WHICH HAS BEEN CLOSED SINCE LAST SEPTEMBER WHEN IT WAS RANSACKED BY "SHIFITAS." END COMMENT.

2. TURNING NEXT TO THE QUESTION OF SEVERANCE PAY FOR SDA HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES, MR. WATSON STATED THAT THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS AHD DECIDED THAT THE SDA MUST MAKE SUCH PPYMENTS. A LOCAL ATTORNEY, ATO GELE MIKAEL BAHETA HAS BEEN RETAINED BY MR. WATSON TO REPRESENT SDA INTERESTS AND FOR LEGAL ADVICE. ACCORDING TO ATO GELE, MAKING SEVERANCE PAYMENTS IS IN KEPING WITH THE NEW LABOR LAW, HAS BEEN DONE BY OTHER NATIONALIZED ORGANIZATIONS, AND WOULD RELEASE THE SDA FROM ANY FURTHER OBLIGATIONS TOWARD THESE EMPLOYEES. MR. WATSON HAS ALSO OBTAINED LEGAL ADVICE FROM OTHER LAWYERS WHO DISAGREE WITH ATO GELE'S VIEWS, BELIEVING THAT SEVERANCE PAY UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IS NOT REQUIRED BY THE LABOR LAW. MR. WATSON HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER TO MAKE THESE PAYMENTS. THE TOTAL AMOUNT IS APPROXIMATELY ETH \$120,000, WHICH COULD BE COVERED BY HISPITAL FUNDS AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF NATIONALIZATION. ONE OF HIS PRINCIPAL CONCERNS IS WHETHER OR NOT SUCH PAYMENTS SHOULD BE MADE IN THE ABSENCE OF WRITTEN CONFIRMATION THAT THE HISPITAL HAS BEEN NATIONALIZED.

3. ASSUMING THE HOSPITAL HAS BEEN NATIONALIZED AND AFTER THE SEVERANCE PAY ISSUE HAS BEEN RESOLVED, MR. WATSON PLANS TO PRESENT A CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION. THE VALUE OF THE CLAIM WILL BE APPROXIMATELY ETH \$4 MILLION. AN INVENTORY IS BEING TAKEN BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE SDA WHICH WILL FORM THE BASIS OF THE CLAIM. ACCORDING TO MR. WATSON THE ADVENTISTS HAVE A VERY WELL DEFINED AGREEMENT WITH THE ETHIOPIAN GOVT WHICH WAS SIGNED IN 1960; ATO GELE BELIEVES THAT IT SHOULD SERVE TO PROTECT THEIR INTERESTS EFFECTIVELY.

4. IN A RELATED INCIDENT , SDA EXPATRIATE HOSPITAL PERSONNEL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WERE TOLD BY IMMIGRATION ON JULY 22 TO APPEAR IN PERSON AT THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE ON JULY 23 AT WHICH TIME THEIR PASSPORTS WERE TAKEN FROM THEM AND THEY WERE ADVISED THAT THEY WOULD BE EXPELLED FROM THE COUNTRY SHORTLY. AFTER LEAVING THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE, DR. FLAIZ CALLED THE EMBASSY TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE. THE CHARGE MADE REPRESENTATIONS ON THEIR BEHALF TO ATO BERHANE DERESSA, OFFICE OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS, MOFA, AND THAT AFTERNOON THE PASSPORTS OF THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED

WERE RETURNED TO THEM. ACCORDING TO MR. WATSON, THOSE SDA EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL WISHING TO LEAVE HAVE HAD NO DIFFICULTY SINCE JULY 23 IN OBTAINING EXIT VISAS, EXCEPT FOR THE HISPITAL ADMINISTRATOR MR. ALIMONTE AND THE CHIEF SURGEON DR. HOL. MR. WATSON BELIEVES THEY WILL BE REFUSED EXIT VISAS UNTIL THE SEVERANCE PAY ISSUE IS RESOLVED.

5. COMMENT

A. MR. WATSON, WHO IS STATIONED AT THE SDA REGIONAL OFFICE IN BEIRUT , IS A LEVELHEADED, VUSINESSLIKE INDIVIDUAL WHO APPEARS INTENT ON PROTECTING ADVENTIST INTEREST BUT AT THE SAME TIME NOT IN A MANNER SHICH UNDULY ANTAGONIZES ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITES. HE CLEARLY HOPES THAT THE GOVT WILL HAVE A SHANGE OF HEART OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AND ASKE THE ADVENTISTS TO RETURN. HE ALSO DOES NOT WANT TO JEOPARDIZE OTHER SDA INTERESTS IN ETHIOPIA.

B. ASIDE FROM THE ASSISTANCE REUESTED PER PARA THREE ABOVE, ADVENTISTS HAVE NOT ASKED THE EMBASSY FOR ANY OTHE R HELP. MR. WATSON STRIKES US AS UNDERSTANDING THE LIMITS OF OUR ABILITY TO HELP AND IS WILLING TO ACCEPT THOSE LIMITS. AMONG THE ADVENTIST GROUP IN ETHIOPIA, HOWEVER, THERE MAY BE SOME WHO ARE LESS WILLING TO UNDERSTAND OR ECCEPT THE EMBASS'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS RESPECT AND MAY WELL TRY TO BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR IN WASHINTON ON BEHALF OF THEIR CUASE. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE BEING ADVISED OF ANY SUCH ATTEMPTS IF THEY ARE MADE.

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